

REMARKS

Claims 1-3 and 6-45 are pending in this application.

Applicants acknowledge the allowance of claims 32-35 and 37-45 and the finding that claims 5-13, 16, 18 and 19 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form incorporating the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Applicants have merged the limitations of original claim 5 into claim 1. Claim 1, the base claim, now contains its original limitations and those of original claim 5, which depended directly on claim 1 with no intervening claims. Therefore, Applicants maintain that claim 1 is a form suitable for allowance since it is in independent form and conforms to subject matter found to be allowable. Claims 4 and 5 have been cancelled as not further limiting claim 1 and claim 6 has been amended to change its dependency from claim 5 to claim 1. Claims 2, 3, 6-15 and 17-19 depend on claim 1, and so define allowable subject matter as well.

Claim 16, which depended directly on claim 1, has been amended to incorporate all of the limitations of original claim 1 therein. This claim now defines subject matter found to be allowable in a form suitable for allowance.

Claim 20 has been amended to specify that the solid thermoplastic elastomer thickener, "comprises a solid thermoplastic ionomer with secondary bonding comprising ionic bonds." This language conforms to the thermoplastic elastomers defined in original claim 5, which was found to be an allowable claim. Claim 20 also conforms to allowed claim 32 but unlike claim 32, the thermoplastic ionomer thickener defined therein does not need to be a solid **acrylic** ionomer resin. Claims 24 and 25 have been amended to conform to claim 20 by deleting "acrylic block copolymers" which need not be ionomers.

Claims 21-31 now depend either directly or indirectly on allowable claim 20 and so these claims also define allowable subject matter.

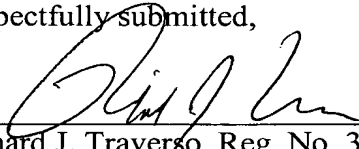
Reply to 12/18/05 Office Action

Claims 32-35 and 37-45 are allowed. Claims 36 and 37 have been amended to depend on allowed claim 32.

In view of the above, favorable reconsideration is courteously requested. If there are any remaining issues which can be expedited by a telephone conference, the Examiner is courteously invited to telephone counsel at the number indicated below.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fees associated with this response or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 13-3402.

Respectfully submitted,


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